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SUBJECT Richard Osborne

FRANK REYNOLDS: The name is Richard W. Osborne, and the Soviets were not trying to be cute or clever when they say they caught him red-handed in Moscow spying for the United States. Osborne is, or was, officially in the Economics Section of the U.S. Embassy there. However, as diplomatic correspondent Barrie Dunsmore reports, he had other things to do, as well.

BARRIE DUNSMORE: The Soviet Union today claimed it had caught a U.S. diplomat engaging in espionage. And ABC News has learned that the man was indeed an American intelligence agent.

In a statement in the official Soviet newspaper Izvestia, the KGB charged that U.S. diplomat Richard Osborne was caught, in their words, with a kit of portable spying apparatus for transmitting intelligence information via satellite and hand written notes recorded in a notebook made up of paper that dissolves quickly in water. The statement added that Osborne would thus be expelled.

The official U.S. reaction was telling for what it did not so. There were no denials and no threats of retaliation.

MAN: We'll confirm that he was declared, has been declared persona non grata by the Soviets. He's a First Secretary in the Economics Section.

DUNSMORE: Further indications of tacit U.S. admission of guilt are that no picture of Osborne is being made available by the State Department, and also no biography.

Officials are unwilling to discuss precisely what Osborne was up to or how he got caught. However, intelligence

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sources concede that equipment does exist that can be used in the field to communicate with a satellite.

And interestingly, no one here appears to see the incident in terms of new tension in U.S.-Soviet relations.